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## STATE VERSUS LOCAL VIEWPOINT ON FILTER PLANT CONTROL<sup>1</sup>

BY ROBERT B. MORSE<sup>2</sup>

Within recent years the author has found himself in the peculiar position of having the responsibility both of supervising the operation of water purification works for the State and of operating such works for a sanitary district. During this period, the opportunity has arisen to study the contrasting mental attitudes which differences in function create in the same or different persons. Although the contrast between the viewpoints of operator and state employee is not as sharp as that indicated in the metamorphosis of a Jekyll to a Hyde, with either in the more desirable rôle, yet it is sufficiently interesting to make analysis valuable.

The duties of operator and state representative may be differentiated psychologically by remembering that in the first case emphasis is placed upon the means and the economy of producing a good water, while in the second the end product is all-important. The operator has placed upon him restrictions of time and money, under either private or municipal control, which automatically shift his major thoughts to methods and divert them from the ultimate product. The state representative, by the very nature of his duties, finds himself in a cosmos in which the final product stars, while costs and practicability sometimes take only non-speaking parts in the cast. The fact that the two men frequently stand on opposite sides of the fence may go far towards explaining some of the failures of state control to create real improvement in water supplies. An attempt will be made to indicate why in many instances the two do find themselves with a wall between them. With the reasons before us, a method of removing the barrier will soon appear.

<sup>1</sup>Read before the Cleveland Convention, June 8, 1921. Discussions are invited and should be sent to the Editor.

<sup>2</sup>Chief Engineer, Maryland State Department of Health, Baltimore; Chief Engineer, Washington Suburban Sanitary District, Washington.

Owing to the comparatively recent development of the scheme of water supply control by the state, it has come about that a large proportion of state representatives, particularly those in the field, are young men. Older men are not available in many instances because state budgets are still exceedingly lean. We then have before us, at the start, "youth" and its possible accompaniments, inexperience, lack of tact, impatience, and often self-importance, all qualities which, of course, older men are supposed to have eliminated or else to have learned to conceal.

When official governmental power is conferred upon maturity it sometimes leads to harmless pomposity; when it falls into the hands of youth it usually results in evident egotism, reinforced by a badge. This objectionable bureaucratic attitude is by no means uncommon in officials, whether municipal, state or federal. This sense of importance, based upon powers of statute, appears to be the cornerstone of the wall at one end, the state. The cement is furnished in abundance by youth.

On the other hand, is the operator the paragon of all virtues, preyed upon by the militant bearers of the law? Perhaps not. Whereas youth and power sometimes engender expansive chests, yet maturity and narrow experience may create the same psychical phenomenon at a more dangerous part of the anatomy, the head. The operator frequently meets the newcomer with an unfriendliness born of a resentment at interference of generally a younger man, who has had no particular and detailed knowledge of the operator's plant and just as often no special knowledge of plants in general. It is with this attitude of contempt that the other cornerstone of the wall is laid and, in this case, cement is no less plentiful, though supplied by experience.

It may appear, now, that we have reached this blank wall with suspicion and unfriendliness on one side, and force and egotism on the other, that the wall is insurmountable. It should not be. Any structure should collapse if its keystones are removed. In our present problem, the keystones are the result of attitudes and not of men. To destroy the keystones we need change only the viewpoint of the men. If the state representative, regardless of his lawful powers, will approach the plant operator in a spirit of helpfulness and with an open mind, if he will study carefully each plant before arriving at conclusions regarding improvements in construction and operation, if he will consult with, rather than rail at, the

plant operator in the realization that the good will of the latter is essential before any fruitful changes in control will be possible, if he will keep before him the desire to help and behind him the desire to order, then he will disintegrate his part of the barrier.

The task for the operator is a more difficult one, since it is that of converting suspicion into cooperation, where the fruits of cooperation are not at first apparent. The state official should find it easy to forget his badge, because by so doing the development of his plan becomes less arduous. The operator, however, has a greater difficulty in visualizing the benefits which accrue to him by accepting the offerings of the upstart. He feels that somehow he gives more than he receives, that he knows his own plant better than anyone else can, that his dignity suffers by permitting any interference or suggestion. If he may be brought to conceive, however, that youth may gather experience quickly through the continuous coordination of study of a number of purification works and may obtain an actual maturity of judgment through contact with varied problems at a series of plants, and that daily routine may have prevented him from keeping pace with developments in his field, then the operator may see the advantage of cooperation. Suspicion will almost always succumb to the helpful presentation of new ideas. Where views are continually changing and where new methods are appearing, the possibility of gaining knowledge of these through state assistance will do much to remove the antagonism of the operator.

It is apparent that the success of bringing operator and state representative together on common ground depends only upon the establishment of friendly relationship between them. In the case of the operator, it means the elimination of the feeling of resentment if aid is offered or criticism is necessary. That both of these may be desirable at some time is clear, since many operators are not all-wise, even if in practice for years. With the state representative, the establishment of an "entente cordiale" means practically the elimination of the superior attitude of governmental office. In both instances, much can be accomplished if each man remembers that the total of human knowledge is slight. It is wise to join in the use of each other's share, where, after all, there is so little to go around.